



# TOP TEN REASONS FOR HAVING A MEMBERS-ONLY LINKEDIN GROUP FOR YOUR H-1B TST OR JA PARTICIPANTS

In our last Bulletin, we examined the ways you can help your H-1B Technical Skills Training (TST) or Jobs Accelerator (JA) participants use LinkedIn for professional networking. This Bulletin takes a closer look at LinkedIn Groups and why you should consider using them to enhance your program's retention and job placement efforts. LinkedIn Groups are intended to provide an online forum for persons in the same industry or with similar interests to share ideas, find answers to problems of mutual interest, post and view employment opportunities and make professional contacts. There are more than two million groups on LinkedIn, ranging from some that have several members to those that have thousands. The groups can be set up at no cost and can be open to all persons in the LinkedIn network or limited to those approved by the group's administrator.

## TOP TEN REASONS FOR HAVING A MEMBERS-ONLY LINKEDIN GROUP



There are many reasons why you should consider setting up a members-only LinkedIn Group for your H-1B TST or JA participants. Here are our top ten:

1. **A LinkedIn Group helps you stay in touch with your participants** – Participant engagement and retention is a critical component of every employment and training program. A LinkedIn Group allows you to stay in touch with your participants 24 hours a day, seven days a week by creating a channel for sharing information of interest such as industry news or job postings. Of course, a LinkedIn

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Group won't replace the need for staff to have face-to-face or telephone contact with participants, but it can supplement these methods of communication by providing another avenue for support.

2. **A LinkedIn Group promotes peer-to-peer support** – While it's important to address a participant's needs with direct staff support and referrals to outside agencies, there is much to be gained by encouraging peer-to-peer support. A members-only LinkedIn Group can be used to facilitate communication among participants and provide them with another source of encouragement and information as they navigate their way through the job market.
3. **A LinkedIn Group provides an opportunity to engage virtual volunteers** – Are you looking for a creative way to engage volunteers from a distance? You might want to consider engaging a volunteer career coach or, perhaps, a volunteer industry mentor who can initiate online discussions, answer questions, and



post information of interest. It's a volunteer assignment that can be done from home, and that home can be anywhere in the United States or the world.

4. **A LinkedIn Group helps you establish your organization's brand as tech savvy –** With more and more people having smart phones and access to the Internet, it's essential for every employment and training organization to have a social media presence. It not only enhances your ability to market your services and provide participant support, but also sends a clear signal to interested applicants that you are using the latest technology to connect trainees to the world of work.
5. **A LinkedIn Group provides opportunities for participants to sharpen their professional social media skills –** The ability to use social media for career advancement is a learned skill. A members-only LinkedIn Group provides a safe place for participants to learn and sharpen these skills throughout their involvement with your program.
6. **A LinkedIn Group provides opportunities for participants to be recognized for their contributions –** As your participants engage in your group's online discussions, their contributions are automatically tallied, and they have the opportunity to be recognized as a "Top Influencer" in the group page sidebar. This builds their visibility in the group and provides positive reinforcement for their contributions.
7. **A LinkedIn Group helps create a community between current participants and program graduates –** As your participants graduate and secure employment, they become a valuable source of information about industry trends and employment opportunities. A members-only LinkedIn Group allows them to stay connected to your program

and provides them with an opportunity to share what they are learning with current program participants.



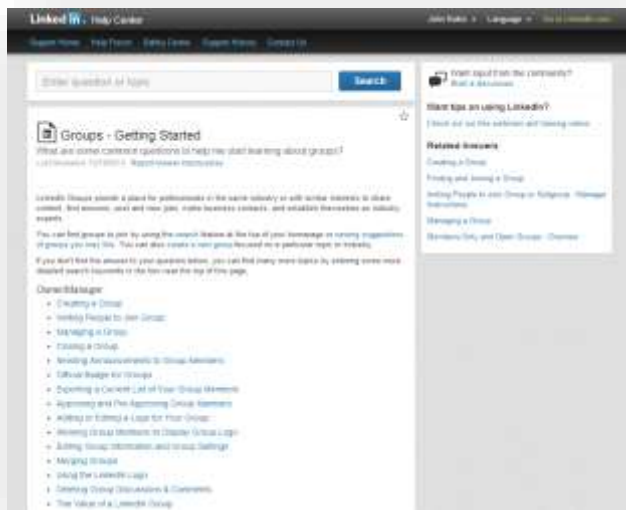
8. **A LinkedIn Group helps participants build their professional network –** To be effective, a LinkedIn network requires at least 50 connections. A members-only LinkedIn Group provides opportunities building a professional network by facilitating connections between students and staff.
9. **A LinkedIn Group provides you with a platform for getting customer feedback –** A members-only LinkedIn Group provides you with an opportunity to determine how participants learned about the program, what they liked or disliked about the enrollment process, and their level of satisfaction with the training and support services. This feedback is invaluable for quality assurance and continuous quality improvement. It also is important for determining the best way to conduct outreach for new participants.
10. **A LinkedIn Group provides an opportunity for connecting participants with industry leaders –** There are many ways to engage industry leaders in your program. These include serving on an advisory board, conducting mock interviews with participants, and participating in job fairs. A LinkedIn Group provides another opportunity for employers who may not have the capacity to visit your program but are comfortable with social media. You can invite them to

become members and encourage them to post industry news and engage in online conversations.

## SETTING UP A LINKEDIN GROUP AND MAINTAINING IT

The LinkedIn Help Center

([http://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a\\_id/1164](http://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/1164)) provides a step-by-step guide for setting up a LinkedIn Group. This includes selecting a name for your group, establishing rules for members, and determining the role of the group's manager. You'll want to visit this page and review the content carefully before setting up your group.



Once your group is established, you'll need to maintain it. This typically requires a daily visit and an online contribution such as link to a news article of interest, a job posting or a response to question posed by a group member. The task of maintaining the group can be shared with other staff members, preferably on a rotating basis so that everyone in your organization has the opportunity to share and learn.